

EPA'S CORE WORK – WHY IT MATTERS

For almost 50 years, EPA has advanced the protection of the air, water and land through core work and actions that underpin its mission to protect public health and the environment. Today, those protections and the very science on which they are based are under siege.

The EPA budgets proposed by the Trump Administration for three straight years undercut the agency's ability to perform its basic functions. Ultimately, Congress passed budgets for 2018 and 2019 that emphatically rejected the drastic cuts proposed by the administration, but left the agency with flat funding in the face of inflation and the lowest staffing levels since 1989. Nevertheless, a dedicated cadre of EPA employees work daily to ensure that the agency continues to fulfill its mission and respond to climate change and emerging environmental and public health threats. EPA's work remains essential to the health and quality of life of all Americans.

Clean, Breathable Air – Dirty air contributes to serious health problems, including lung and heart disease, asthma attacks and other respiratory conditions, and even premature births.

- **Improved Air Quality** – To protect public health, EPA sets enforceable air quality standards for power plants and industrial facilities, reduces vehicle emissions, monitors air quality and shares that information with the public, allowing people to track air quality in their communities.
- **Cleaner Indoor Air** – EPA has been at the forefront of efforts to understand the indoor air pollutants that trigger asthma attacks and raise public awareness of how to prevent them.

Clean Water

- **Safe Drinking Water** – EPA identifies and sets scientifically-based limits for drinking water contaminants, protecting consumers from exposure to toxic chemicals and bacteria and other organisms that can cause serious waterborne illnesses.
- **Protected Waterways** – EPA protects 3.5 million miles of freshwater rivers, lakes and streams and 28 estuaries where freshwater mixes with salt water from the sea; curbs ocean dumping; controls polluted runoff; and restores waters considered “impaired” because they don't meet standards for clean water.

Protection from Chemicals and Pesticides – EPA protects the public from toxic chemicals and pesticides, using science to evaluate their risks, and works to prevent or reduce pollution before it is created.

- EPA evaluates new chemicals for their toxicity and is just beginning the daunting process of evaluating thousands of chemicals already in use as Congress directed in 2015.
- EPA registers pesticides to ensure their safety and reviews pesticides used on food to be sure they are safe for children.

Superfund Cleanups and Emergency Response – Congress gave EPA responsibility for cleaning up some of the nation's most contaminated land and responding to environmental emergencies, oil spills and natural disasters.

- **Superfund** – EPA's Superfund program identifies the worst contaminated sites and either cleans them up or directs polluters to do so; the goal is to return the land to productive use.

- **Emergency Response** – EPA’s highly trained emergency personnel work closely with federal, state and local first responders to protect the public from exposure to hazardous substances in the air, water or on land in the aftermath of hurricanes, floods, wildfires and other disasters.

Reduction of Hazardous Waste – Modern industrial activity generates huge amounts of hazardous waste that finds its way into communities and agricultural areas, threatening health and welfare. EPA helps ensure that hazardous waste is managed safely from creation through disposal.

Effective Environmental Enforcement – Enforcement is a way to ensure that everyone follows the rules designed to protect health and the environment.

- EPA monitors and inspects polluting facilities and brings civil and criminal cases against companies that willfully endanger communities.
- Preparing and prosecuting these cases is resource intensive, but the results are critically important to the communities exposed to danger by companies that don’t follow the rules.

Decisions Informed by Science – Science is at the core of almost everything EPA does to protect the American public from harm. From toxicology to engineering, science is interwoven into standard setting, reviews of new chemicals, Superfund cleanups and overall decision-making. Objective, peer-reviewed science is at the heart of every action EPA takes to protect people, communities and the earth.